

National Botanic Gardens

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GROWING NATIVE PLANTS



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Vol. 10, 1980



Callistemon subulatus

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BIB:84132

INDOOR PLANTS

The growing of indoor plants generally in pots allows individual plants to be moved from room to room, from sun to shade and even outdoors for maintenance. The type and size of pot used should be selected to provide adequate space for root growth, yet be in proportion to the plant. The pot should complement the plant, not distract from it, and for this reason bright colours or unusual shapes should be avoided. Both plastic and clay pots are suitable. Clay pots, however, dry out more quickly than plastic ones. This can be beneficial or a disadvantage depending on the requirements of the plant to be grown.

The soil mix used (see below) can also be varied to meet the particular requirements of individual plants. If the plant prefers a mix which retains more water, additional peat moss should be added. If a drier mix is required the sand component should be increased. In all cases, however, the mix must be free draining to permit sufficient oxygen to reach the roots to maintain a healthy plant.

Peperomia enervis



Several potting mixes are commercially available, but it is recommended that, if possible, one should make up one's own mixes as this allows variations to be made to meet individual requirements of plants. A mix which has proved suitable for a wide range of plants consists of:

- 2 parts loam
- 1 part well-rotted cow manure
- 1 part peat moss
- 1 part leaf mould
- 1 part coarse river sand

With indoor plants there is often a tendency to over-water, particularly if the plant is over-potted. If the soil remains continually wet, air will be excluded from the soil and the roots will rot. It is better to water the plant thoroughly and let the soil dry out significantly before rewatering rather than continue to retain the soil moisture at a high constant level.

A continuous supply of minerals is required if plants are to remain healthy. This can be supplied by fertilisers both organic and inorganic. In the above mix, the manure will meet the plant's initial mineral requirements. Additional mineral requirements may be met by the application to the soil of an inorganic fertiliser, a general NPK mix, or an organic fertiliser such as blood and bone. A liquid fertiliser, either organic or inorganic, may also be used. For further information on plant nutrition the reader is referred to Volume 9 of *Growing Native Plants*.

Most indoor plants require pruning to establish and maintain a pleasing appearance. Pruning should begin when the plant is small and take the form of regular tip pruning.

From time to time it will be necessary to repot plants to prevent the root system from becoming too restricted—a condition which will result in the plant losing vigour. At repotting the plant is normally transferred into a slightly larger pot. The plant should be carefully removed from its pot and roots curling at the bottom pruned off before it is placed in the larger pot with new soil. If the plant is to be returned to the same pot the bottom third of the roots and soil should be removed and replaced with new soil.

Most plants grown indoors can survive in this environment but from time to time a spell outside in a shaded bushhouse is beneficial. It is also worthwhile placing the plants outside in a rain shower or hosing regularly to remove house dust. This should be done only during the warmer months to avoid chilling.

Plants grown indoors are usually selected on the basis of their foliage. They may have large, glossy green leaves and/or attractive



Archontophoenix alexandrae

leaf shapes. Many have coloured new leaves. Some also have attractive or unusual flowers and/or fruits. To perform well indoors they must be capable of continued growth in poorer light than outdoors and be suited to pot culture.

Many Australian plants, rainforest species in particular, meet the above requirements. The plants considered in this article are by no means an exhaustive list but represent a selection which has tremendous potential as indoor plants. Many Australian ferns make excellent indoor plants and readers are referred to Volume 7 of *Growing Native Plants*, which deals with suitable species.

Species suitable as indoor plants:

Agathis robusta (kauri pine). A tall, straight tree with dark green, glossy, elliptical leaves which makes an excellent indoor plant when young. Propagated from seed. Distribution: rainforests of Queensland.

Alocasia macrorrhizos (cunjevoi). This species may reach a height of 1.5 m. It has large, spade-shaped, radical leaves on long fleshy petioles. A greenish cream flower similar to an arum lily appears in summer. Requires shade and a damp situation and well-composted soil. Distribution: rainforests of New South Wales and Queensland.

Araucaria. Two species of *Araucaria* occur naturally in mainland Australia. Like the Norfolk Island pine, *A. heterophylla*, they make excellent indoor plants when young.

A. bidwillii (bunya pine). In its natural environment this species forms a tall, straight tree to 40 m. Its growth is symmetrical and the leaves are a shiny dark green to 4 cm long, making it an excellent species for use as an indoor plant. Propagated from seed. Distribution: Queensland.

A. cunninghamii (hoop pine). This species is also a tall, straight tree in its natural environment. The leaves are narrower and much shorter than those of *A. bidwillii*. Its growth is symmetrical and in appearance it closely resembles the Norfolk Island pine. Propagated from seed. Distribution: Queensland and NSW.

Archontophoenix. The Bangalow palm, *A. cunninghamiana*, and the king palm, *A. alexandrae*, both form excellent indoor plants when young. The leaves are pinnate and grow to 2 m in mature plants. Both require a well-composted soil and ample moisture. Propagated from seed. Distribution: *A. cunninghamiana*, Queensland and NSW; *A. alexandrae*, Queensland.

Athrotaxis selaginoides. The genus *Athrotaxis* contains three species: *A. cupressoides* (pencil pine), *A. laxifolia* and *A. selaginoides* (King Billy pine). All are endemic to Tasmania and are slow-growing, medium-to-tall trees with handsome foliage. *A. selaginoides*, in particular, forms a shapely tree well suited as a tub plant for Christmas decorations. Propagated from cuttings.

Boea hygropica. This rosetted herb has hairy, almost heart-shaped leaves growing to 10 cm with scalloped margins. The flowers are deep purple, closely related to the African violets. The plant grows naturally on exposed rocks and during the dry season becomes completely desiccated, rejuvenating as soon as rain comes. Propagated from leaf cuttings. Distribution: Queensland.

Calamus (lawyer palm or wait-a-while). Members of this genus are all climbing palms armed with vicious spines. Despite this they make good indoor plants when young, when they are self-supporting with several stems to 1 m or less. They grow best in a shaded position and in well-composted soil. Propagated from seed. Distribution: Queensland and NSW.

Castanospermum australe (black bean). This species occurs in the rainforests of Queensland and NSW where it grows to a large tree. Its shiny, dark green, pinnate leaves make it an excellent foliage plant for indoors. Propagated from seed.



Boea hygroskopica

Cissus. *Cissus antarctica* (native grape or kangaroo vine) and *Cissus hypoglauca* are both vigorous tendril climbers. The former has dark green, toothed, ovate leaves to 10 cm while the latter has dark green leaves with five leaflets emerging from one point. Both species have small flowers and bluish black fruits. A shaded position, well-composted soil and ample moisture are required. Propagated from cuttings. Distribution: *C. antarctica*, NSW and Queensland; *C. hypoglauca*, Victoria, NSW and Queensland.

Colocasia esculenta (taro). Large, heart-shaped, dark green leaves on long petioles produced from a rhizome make this species an attractive indoor pot plant. It grows well in full shade and damp conditions. Propagated by division. Distribution: a pan-tropical species.

Cordyline spp. All the Australian species of this genus make excellent indoor plants. The long tapering leaves radiate from a slender palm-like trunk. Masses of small flowers followed by showy fruits, red or black in colour, are produced on long arching stems. *C. murchisonii*, a dwarf species to 1 m, which bears red fruits, is particularly recommended as an indoor plant. Propagated from either seed or cuttings.

Curcuma australasica. This species has large, light green leaves to 70 cm long. In summer it produces a flower spike with yellow flowers subtended by pink bracts which fade to green. This species has distinct growing and dormant periods and water



Rhaphidophora australasica

should be withheld during the winter dormant period. Requires a shaded position and well-drained soil. Propagated by division. Distribution: open forests of north-east Queensland and the Northern Territory.

Eupomatia spp. Both *E. bennettii* and *E. laurina* (native guava) are excellent as indoor plants. Both form shapely shrubs with glossy green mature leaves and red-bronze young growth. In the case of *E. laurina* the leaves are elliptical to 12 cm while *E. bennettii* has ovate leaves to 20 cm. Both require shade and well-composted soil. The fruits in each case are about 2 cm in diameter and resemble rosehips which as they ripen become soft and fig-like. In flavour the fruit is said to resemble guava. Propagated from cuttings. Distribution: *E. bennettii*, NSW and Queensland; *E. laurina*, Victoria, NSW and Queensland.

Grevillea robusta (silky oak). A tall, fast-growing rainforest species, *G. robusta* is the largest member of the genus *Grevillea*. Its pyramidal shape and light green, pinnate leaves with lobed segments make it an excellent indoor plant when young. Prefers a sunny position. Propagated from seed. Distribution: rainforests of Queensland and NSW.

Helmholtzia glaberrima. This is a flax-like plant with leaves to 1.5 m. In summer a tall, branching panicle of small, pale pink flowers is produced. Requires shade and well-composted soil. Propagated from seed or by division. Distribution: rainforests of Queensland and northern NSW.

Hoya macgillivrayi. Members of the genus *Hoya* have thick, succulent leaves and, in general, inhabit rainforest. In southern Australia they should be regarded as glass-house plants but are well worth trying as indoor plants. *Hoya macgillivrayi* is particularly beautiful with thick, ovate leaves to 10 cm and clusters of large, waxy, maroon flowers. Propagated from cuttings. Distribution: rainforest of far north Queensland.

Howeia belmoreana and *H. forsterana* (Lord Howe Island palms). These two palms make excellent indoor plants and are often incorrectly sold by nurseries as kentia palms. They have arching pinnate leaves and thrive indoors for many years. Distribution: Lord Howe Island.

Licuala ramsayi (fan palm). This palm grows to 10 m and has large, circular leaves often splitting along veins. The younger leaves are divided. It makes an excellent indoor plant, performing well in heavy shade. Propagated from seed. Distribution: Queensland.

Linospadix monostachyus (walking stick palm). This species grows into a graceful small palm well suited as an indoor plant. It has a slender trunk with pinnate leaves to 1.2 m and showy, red fruits. It likes a shaded position and well-composted soil. Propagated from seed. Distribution: rainforests of NSW and Queensland.

Livistona. A number of Australian members of this genus make excellent indoor plants when young. All have fan-shaped leaves and may be kept in pots for many years. *L. australis* is perhaps the best known. Propagated from seed. Distribution: east coast of Australia.

Omalanthus populifolius (bleeding heart). When young this species makes an excellent indoor plant. A small tree, it has ovate leaves to 12 cm. Older leaves turn brilliant red before falling. Propagated from cuttings or seed. Distribution: NSW and Queensland.

Pisonia umbellifera (bird lime tree). This small tree with shiny, elliptical leaves makes an excellent indoor plant and is suitable as a bonsai subject. Propagated from cuttings. Distribution: rainforests of NSW and Queensland.



Howeia forsterana

Cordyline murchisonii



Peperomia tetraphylla. Many exotic *Peperomia* species have been used as indoor plants but the native species are rarely seen in cultivation. *Peperomia tetraphylla*, in particular, makes an excellent indoor plant for a shallow pot or terrarium with its spreading habit and shiny, succulent, light green leaves. Propagated from cuttings. Distribution: NSW and Queensland.

Ptychosperma elegans. A palm well suited as an indoor plant with long, pinnate leaves and red fruits. Propagated from seed. Distribution: Queensland.

Raphidophora australasica. This species is an excellent indoor plant, being a vigorous root climber with shiny, elliptical leaves to 40 cm and requiring a shaded position. *R. pinnata* with broader divided or holed leaves is reminiscent of the well-known exotic *Monstera*. Propagated from cuttings. Distribution: Queensland and the Northern Territory.

Schefflera actinophylla (umbrella tree). This species is widely used as an indoor plant and is commonly sold under its earlier name

Brassaia actinophylla. It has light green, elliptical leaflets to 30 cm radiating from a single point, resulting in the leaf resembling an umbrella. In nature the plant often grows as a lithophyte or epiphyte and consequently can be grown well in small containers. Propagated from cuttings. Distribution: Queensland and the Northern Territory.

Syzygium (lilly-pilly). Several species in this genus display considerable potential as indoor plants when young. They have glossy, dark green leaves with red to pink new growth and colourful flowers and fruits. *S. luehmannii* (syn. *Eugenia luehmannii*) has very glossy leaves to 6 cm, red to pink new growth, and red, pear-shaped fruit 12 mm long. Young plants are weeping in habit. *S. moorei* has thick, glossy, dark green leaves, pink flowers and bears an edible fruit to 6 cm in diameter. *S. paniculatum* (syn. *Eugenia australis*) grows to 18 m but has been used successfully as a bonsai subject. It has glossy, dark green leaves, red new growth and red fruits to 25 mm long. Propagated from seed. Distribution: NSW and Queensland.

Roger Ellyard

Curcuma australasica



Cordyline sp.



CALLISTEMON SUBULATUS

Callistemon subulatus is an attractive member of the Myrtaceae family occurring naturally along creek banks and in similar moist situations on the Woronora Plateau area in the Sydney region. As with most *Callistemon* species it adapts readily to cultivation and is commonly referred to as a bottlebrush.

Plants grown in Canberra have formed spreading shrubs 1.2m in height and 1.8m across. In its natural habitat it grows in fairly sheltered positions and although it responds to protection from wind in cultivation, it is adaptable to either a sunny or semi-shaded position. Plants grown in the open tend to flower better and remain compact.

It tolerates both heavy and light soils but should be kept moist at all times. Supplementary summer watering in Canberra is necessary.

As with other *Callistemon* species it has a tendency to become sparse with age unless pruned. The best pruning method is to cut flowers for indoor decoration or remove the

spent heads after flowering. This also prevents fruit formation and induces lateral growth which keeps the plant compact and encourages more potential flowering branches for the following season.

C. subulatus has linear leaves 2–5 cm long and about 2–4 mm wide. They have a pungent tip. The rich red to crimson flowers¹ are borne in profusion in late spring and some flowers are seen even in autumn and winter. Bees and other insects and many species of honeyeaters are attracted to this shrub.

C. subulatus is a useful species when used as a 'fill-in' shrub or as an informal hedge or barrier. The species is frost hardy.

It can be grown from either seed or semi-hard cuttings but like many species varies considerably when grown from seed. Cuttings from a good form are preferable. These should be taken from February to April and be about 10 cm long.

Webbing moth noted on this species can be controlled by the use of Carbaryl®. Fasciation has also been noted occasionally, though never to a serious degree.

Geoff Butler

¹RHS Colour Chart, 1966: flowers, red group 45A to 45B.

Callistemon subulatus: *Callistemon*—a Greek compound, *calli-* (*kalli-*), from *kalos*, beautiful, and *-stemon* from *stema*, stamen, referring to the most conspicuous parts of the flower; *subulatus*—a botanical Latin adjective from *subula*, awl, referring to the finely pointed 'awl-shaped' leaves.



PHEBALIUM SQUAMULOSUM subsp. ARGENTEUM

The ten subspecies of *Phebalium squamulosum* currently recognised occur in eastern Australia from north-east Queensland to Wilsons Promontory, Victoria. They vary from slender, small trees 7m high to prostrate shrubs.

P. squamulosum subsp. *argenteum* occurs naturally along the coast of NSW from Port Stephens to the Victorian border. It is generally a spreading or erect shrub, growing along cliff tops, but also occurs on beach dunes, where it is frequently associated with *Leptospermum laevigatum*.

The leaves are elliptical, 1–3 cm long, with new growth and the underside of the old leaves covered with silvery scales. It is quite hardy in cultivation, much more so than the other subspecies. Shrubs are dense and rounded and grow to 1.5m in five years. When in new leaf, plants have a silvery appearance and this, together with the rounded habit, makes it a contrasting garden subject.



Phebalium squamulosum subsp. *argenteum*

Flowers are small, less than 10mm in diameter, with bright yellow anthers and white petals.¹ Flowering begins in early September and lasts about four weeks. As with most members of the Rutaceae family, *P. squamulosum* subsp. *argenteum* is difficult to grow from seed. Fortunately it strikes well from cuttings, rooting in four to eight weeks. Slightly hardened new season's growth will give best results although some success has been achieved at other times of the year.

Regular light tip pruning can be beneficial, especially if a screen or low hedge is desired.

When grown as a pot plant its performance is good, but it should be pointed out that its main attraction is foliage and form.

If the natural habitat is any indication this subspecies could be grown where salt spray is a problem.

Peter Ollerenshaw



¹RHS Colour Chart, 1966: petals, white group 155A; stamens, yellow group 4B.

Phebalium squamulosum subsp. *argenteum*: *Phebalium*—from the Greek, *phibaleos*, an early fig tree, and formerly supposed to indicate a myrtle; *squamulosum*—the neuter gender of the Latin adjective *squamulosus*, covered with small scales; *argenteum*—the neuter gender of the Latin adjective *argenteus*, silvery, referring to the colour of the small scales.

ACACIA HOWITTII

It seems unusual that *Acacia howittii* is such a hardy and quick grower in cultivation and yet is on the list of endangered species of Australian plants. However, in its natural habitat this plant is restricted to a portion of the southern Gippsland hills, between Yarram and Tarra Valley, a distance of only 20 km.

It is a graceful large shrub or small tree of dense, weeping habit reaching a height of 5–8 m. The dark green phyllodes are 1–2 cm long and slightly sticky, hence the common name of sticky wattle. This stickiness is especially noticeable when the tree is being pruned. It responds well to hard pruning and one specimen in the National Botanic Gardens, restricted to a height of 1 m, thickened up so rapidly that it formed an ideal hedge plant.

The primary use to which *A. howittii* is put in the Gardens, however, is as a screen plant, and one stand of seven plants used for screening an amenities block on the *Eucalyptus* lawn never ceases to gain the admiration of visitors. The trees were planted in autumn 1972 at 2 m spacings and now form a dense wall 3 m high. This height is maintained by cutting the tops back 2 m each year.

The flowers are pale yellow¹ balls appearing in spring. The fruiting pods which follow are 4–6 cm long and 5 mm wide.

Propagation is from scarified seed with germination generally taking between sixteen and eighteen days under ideal seed-raising conditions in the National Botanic Gardens nursery. Recently, however, good results have been obtained by directly sowing the pre-treated seed into pots of a friable, sandy mix. Although germination has been slower, taking up to one month, the intermediate stage of pricking out is avoided and thus no setback is caused to the seedling. The seed is best sown in spring, or early summer, at a depth of 1 cm. The plants should then be ready to go out into the garden in early autumn at a height of 60 cm.



Acacia howittii: *Acacia*—may be from the Greek to sharpen, referring to the prickly nature of the first species discovered; another opinion refers to the Egyptian thorn (*akakia*), a species of *Acacia* which yields gum arabic; *howittii*—in honour of Dr Alfred William Howitt (1830–1908), the English explorer and botanist.

A. howittii appears to be very hardy in a wide range of soils and has survived in a variety of situations within the National Botanic Gardens. Frost damage has not been evident although this may be due to the canopy of naturally occurring eucalypts. Some protection of small plants in newly established gardens is recommended.

The only noticeable pests have been spittle bugs and these have not required control.

A. howittii is now readily available from a number of retail nurseries. Gardeners are advised, however, to resist the temptation to buy advanced plants in small containers as these are slow and often reluctant to establish.

Tony Wilkinson

¹ RHS Colour Chart, 1966: flowers, yellow-green group O154.

EUCALYPTUS MOOREI

Eucalyptus moorei: *Eucalyptus*—a latinised Greek compound, *eu*, well, and *kalyptos*, veiled or covered, an allusion to the calyx and/or petals which form a lid over the flower bud; *moorei*—in honour of Charles Moore (1820–1905), NSW Government Botanist, 1848–96.



Eucalyptus moorei, commonly known as narrow-leaved sally, or little sally, is native to moderately high country in NSW, and is therefore well suited to Canberra's similar climate. It occurs in the Blue Mountains between 1000 and 1200 m and at an altitude of 600–800 m in the Budawang Range area, north-east of Braidwood. It takes the form of either a small tree, seldom over 6 m tall, or a multi-stemmed shrub (mallee), and in its natural habitat, where the soils are shallow and low in nutrients, often forms thickets. It grows on cold, wet sites suggesting tolerance of poor drainage; however, this has not been tested at the National Botanic Gardens.

Several specimens of *E. moorei* growing in the Gardens have been propagated from seed collected at Bell, 15 km north of Blackheath in the Blue Mountains. They were planted in autumn 1972 and now are shapely small trees, 4 m tall. The leaves are 5–6 cm long and are borne on a yellow petiole or leaf stalk. In the months before flowering the combination of yellow petioles and dense clusters of yellow buds¹ causes the tree to take on an overall warm tinge. The previous season's capsules remain along the lower branches and are an attractive feature in themselves.

Flowering time in Canberra is March–April, when masses of white flowers appear. However, individual flowers have been observed as early as January.

Narrow-leaved sally is recommended for small gardens where a compact, shapely tree is desired. It is especially useful in that it is one of the few frost-hardy eucalypts which can be grown in a small native garden without dominating other plantings. Another small tableland species, *Eucalyptus stricta*, the Blue Mountains mallee, with distribution similar to *E. moorei*, could well be combined with it to maintain this low canopy yet provide some variety in the garden.

Eucalyptus moorei is generally fairly free of pests and diseases, with few leaves showing signs of chewing by leaf-eating insects. The presence of scale insects has been observed at times and this is the only pest affecting *E. moorei* that has required attention at the Gardens. An application of Malathion[®] and white oil in the recommended proportions is effective.

Propagation is from seed.

Tony Wilkinson

¹RHS Colour Chart, 1966: yellow group 11D.

TRISTANIA LAURINA

Tristania laurina: *Tristania*—in honour of Jules M. C. Tristan (1776–1861), a French botanist; *laurina*—a Latin adjective derived from *laurus*, a laurel or bay tree, and the suffix, *inus*, indicating resemblance.

The forest tree *Tristania laurina* is commonly known as the kanooka or water gum, belongs to the family Myrtaceae, and is related to the eucalypts.

It occurs naturally on moist, well-drained sites along the east coast of Australia—from the Brisbane River in Queensland, through coastal NSW to the Gippsland region of Victoria. It is commonly found growing along creek banks and in rainforest openings in light shade to full sunlight.

The species grows from 5 to 15 m in height, is ideally suited to a large garden, and has also been planted as a street tree in Sydney. It grows slowly and rarely attains a large size in southern Australia.

An attractive and compact shade tree in cultivation, *T. laurina* has a smooth bark when young, becoming scaly as the tree matures. The leaves are 5–12 cm long, 1–2 cm wide,





Tristania laurina

glossy dark green above with a paler underside, and are alternately placed along the stems. The flowers are creamy to orange yellow in colour¹, being produced in short clusters in January and early February. The individual flowers are about 10mm in diameter with five small, rounded petals and stamens united in five groups. The seed capsules are woody, globular in shape and 6–8 mm in diameter.

T. laurina is grown from seed which normally germinates after three or four weeks. No special pre-sowing treatment is needed.

The seed should be sown in a loose, well-drained mix at a depth equal to the diameter of the seed. When the seedlings reach a height of 1–2 cm they should be pricked out into a large container until they have grown to a size suitable for planting out.

The frost tolerance of this species varies and southern gardeners should endeavour to obtain seed from their local region in preference to that collected in northern NSW or Queensland.

If you wish to collect your own seed, capsules may be picked in autumn while still green and left in the sun to dry and open. A permit may be required in some States if wild seed is to be collected.

This tree grows well in cultivation and tolerates a variety of soil types from well-drained rocky soils to heavy clay loams, provided ample water is available. Being a small rainforest tree, it will tolerate light shade though growth is more rapid in full sun.

Seven specimens were planted in the National Botanic Gardens in April 1961 and have now reached heights ranging from 3 to 5 m. These can be seen in the upper sections of the rainforest gully.

A common pest of this species is scale which can be controlled by the application of a mixture of Malathion® and white oil. Leafhoppers and leaf-eating beetles occasionally attack the leaves but damage is rarely severe enough to warrant spraying.

The timber of *T. laurina* is close grained, tough, strong and fairly light in weight. It is ideal for the commercial production of tool handles, mallets, golf club heads and wooden screws.

Stephen Hughes

¹RHS Colour Chart, 1966: yellow-orange group 14A.



Tristania laurina fruits

CORREA BAEUERLENII

Correa baeuerlenii, a member of a small genus of about ten species which belongs to the family Rutaceae, has a limited distribution in the wild and is rarely seen in cultivation. It occurs naturally in damp gullies and on the banks of streams on the south coast of NSW from Batemans Bay to Bega, and inland to the foothills of the Great Dividing Range escarpment. The species was first described by Ferdinand von Mueller in 1884 from a specimen collected by William Baeuerlen in the Clyde River district.

The plant itself is a small to medium shrub to about 2m high and 2m wide. The leaves are ovate or almost lanceolate, about 6 cm long and 2 cm wide, glossy dark green on top and lighter underneath. The flowers are terminal or axillary, with a corolla which is cylindrical, to 3 cm long and greenish yellow in colour.¹ The calyx has an expanded base which gives the pendulous flowers the appearance of a chef's cap, resulting in the shrub's common name, chef's cap correa.

C. baeuerlenii is propagated readily from tip cuttings which should be taken when the new growth hardens in summer-autumn.

Most of the specimens in the National Botanic Gardens have been propagated as cuttings from a single plant growing beside a creek in wet *Eucalyptus* forest about 11 km from Nelligen, NSW.

There are about twenty specimens growing in the Gardens in various locations, but all have one thing in common—a shady position. The best specimen is growing in a sheltered Rutaceae bed in the top section of the Gardens. Here a canopy of *Eucalyptus rossii* provides mottled sunlight for most of the day. It is a beautiful shrub, healthy, with dense foliage to ground level. The bed of well-drained Black Mountain soil is mulched with hardwood chips to provide a cool root run through the summer. It has an easterly aspect.

All specimens within the Gardens are doing well, even those exposed to the hardest



Correa baeuerlenii: *Correa*—in honour of José Francisco Correa da Serra (1751–1823), a Portuguese botanist and clergyman; *baeuerlenii*—after William Baeuerlen (b. 1845), a professional plant collector and the discoverer of this species.

frosts, the only apparent damage being a reddening of some leaves.

No insect pests have been recorded and the only disease appears to be an occasional light attack by a leaf-spot fungus.

Main flowering time is winter but flowers also occur intermittently throughout the year.

In summary, a shady position with mulched soil and good drainage seems to be the optimum condition for this shrub.

Neil Fisher

¹RHS Colour Chart, 1966: yellow-green group 149C.

GREVILLEA OBTUSIFLORA 'LITTLE THICKET'

Grevillea obtusiflora 'Little Thicket' is a naturally occurring cultivar, differing from other forms of the species in its low, suckering habit. It has been registered as a cultivar because it has considerable potential for use in landscaping. Should this plant eventually receive a separate botanical name then the cultivar name will lapse.

Grevillea obtusiflora 'Little Thicket': *Grevillea*—after C. F. Greville (1749–1809), an English patron of botany; *obtusiflora*—a botanical Latin compound, *obtus-*, from *obtusus*, blunt, and *-flora*, from *flos*, flower, referring to the rounded lobes of the perianth tube.



This form was originally discovered near Braidwood in NSW and has been in cultivation at the National Botanic Gardens since 1972.

G. obtusiflora is usually a rounded shrub to 1 m high by 1 m wide while the cultivar rarely exceeds 0.5 m high with a diameter of 1 m; however, due to the suckering habit, dense thickets are formed. Suckers appear along surface roots at intervals of 30 cm and up to 5 m from the original plant.

The flowers on the cultivar are produced in small terminal clusters and are generally insignificant, often aborting at an early stage. Flowers are about 8 mm long and pale yellow with a red tinge, and the yellow styles are up to 20 mm in length.¹

The leaves, up to 18 mm long and 3 mm wide, are dark green on the upper surface with the margins rolled under. The under-surface is covered with dense silky hairs.

Propagation is by cuttings, which may be taken at any time of the year, although those taken in late spring or early summer have proved most successful.

The plant is tolerant of a range of soil types and moisture conditions. Its performance has been best in moist, sandy loams and silts, but satisfactory growth has been noted in drier clay soils. No damage has been observed after a sustained dry period.

Because of the suckering habit and subsequent dense growth *G. obtusiflora* 'Little Thicket' has exciting prospects in horticulture, particularly in the landscaping of large areas. The form would be valuable around buildings, carparks, embankments and roadside cuttings. The low, spreading habit has advantages in being unobtrusive yet maintaining an orderly appearance. The suckering habit allows rapid regeneration of damaged areas. As a ground cover it is successful in suppressing weed growth. Its suckering habit also reduces the density of initial planting, resulting in cost savings. The spreading roots and suckering habit also offer advantages in bank stabilisation, particularly roadside cuttings.

In the home garden *G. obtusiflora* 'Little Thicket' could be used as a ground cover, trimmed into a low hedge or as a bank stabiliser.

No pests or diseases have been noted on the plant and it is frost resistant.

Ron Jackson

¹RHS Colour Chart, 1966: perianth tube, near yellow 4C, blushed with red 47B; perianth limb, red 47B; style, near yellow 4B.

BORONIA SUBULIFOLIA

This *Boronia* is only found in a restricted area of the Budawang Range and associated plateaus north-east of Braidwood, NSW. It is closely related to the better known and more widespread *B. pilosa*.

Its natural habitat ranges from low, open heath to forest. In the former situation, plants tend to be 70–80 cm high with compact habit, while in the latter they may exhibit a considerably taller, more straggly appearance in their search for light.

The star-shaped, pink flowers¹ consisting of four petals, each 6–10 mm long, are produced singly in the leaf axils in spring from September to mid November. The soft, hairy leaves, each consisting of seven to nine tapered leaflets, are crowded along the stems.

Boronia subulifolia



Boronia subulifolia: *Boronia*—after Francesco Borone (1769–94), an Italian plant collector; *subulifolia*—a botanical Latin compound, *subuli-*, from *subula*, awl, and *-folia*, from *folium*, leaf, referring in this case to the finely pointed 'awl-shaped' leaflets.

In cultivation, with regular watering and application of fertiliser, this species tends to be more vigorous than in the wild and produces large arching branches. A well-drained sandy soil in dappled shade, maintained in a cool state by mulching or the placement of rocks around the root zone, should ensure success. Tip pruning immediately after flowering will encourage more compact growth and more flowers the following year.

Of the ten plants growing in the Gardens, four are over 10 years old, about 1 m high by 1.5 m across, and are healthy, compact, vigorous shrubs which flower freely.

As with other species of *Boronia*, propagation from soft-tip cuttings taken in summer will be readily successful.

B. subulifolia would appear to be long lived, free of insect pests and diseases and long flowering—qualities which recommend it for more widespread cultivation.

Richard Nipperess

¹RHS Colour Chart, 1966: corolla, purple group 75A.

HIBBERTIA EMPETRIFOLIA

Hibbertia empetrifolia, formerly known as *H. astrotricha*, occurs naturally in south-eastern Australia, over a wide area from Newcastle (NSW) around the coast to Kangaroo Island (South Australia) and also in Tasmania.

In the wild it varies from a small, wind-swept shrub usually less than 30 cm high on coastal sand dunes to a medium shrub of 1.2 m. In very exposed positions, plants may be poor and twiggy, 10–15 cm high. The wide variety of habitats in which this plant occurs include coastal dunes, heath, woodland and wet and dry *Eucalyptus* forests.

Flowering is in spring, beginning in late September and continuing until the end of October. At their peak, plants resemble bright yellow mounds¹ with the foliage scarcely visible between the flowers.

Long, thin stems tend to sprawl out from the centre of the shrub, and in small bushes this has a cascading effect. In older shrubs,

however, the growth is dense, giving a tight, mounded appearance.

During severe winters, plants in exposed positions may be frost burnt on the growing tips. This is usually not serious and does little harm to the plant.

Propagation is generally by cuttings, which strike quite readily especially if taken early in January or February. Seed germination is variable and unreliable.

This is one of the hardier species of *Hibbertia* with many specimens over 7 years old growing at the National Botanic Gardens. In one case a plant 3.5 m across and 1.7 m high has been formed.

Plants appear to be pest and disease free and it has been noticed that shrubs planted in a shady position stay dense but grow more slowly than those in an open, sunny spot.

H. empetrifolia would be a beautiful addition to most gardens and could be used to advantage as a ground cover or for height variation in a shrub bed.

Peter Ollerenshaw

¹RHS Colour Chart, 1966: flowers, yellow group 9A.

Hibbertia empetrifolia: *Hibbertia*—after George Hibbert (d. 1837 or 1838), a London merchant and patron of botany who maintained a botanic garden at Clapham; *empetrifolia*—a botanical Latin compound, *empetri-*, from *Empetrum*, the name of a northern temperate genus, and *-folia*, from *folium*, leaf, indicating that its leaves resemble those of that genus.



KUNZEA sp. 'BADJA CARPET'

Kunzea sp. 'Badja Carpet', a trailing or prostrate shrub, is an excellent ground cover ideally suited to Canberra's climate and soil conditions. It grows naturally on Big Badja Hill, north-east of Cooma, NSW, and may belong to a species new to science. It has been registered as a cultivar because it has great horticultural potential, and although the cultivar name might lapse when the plant is finally given a botanical name, this allows it to be identified in the nursery trade.

The cultivar is closely related to *K. capitata* but differs markedly in habit. *K. capitata* is generally a rounded shrub to 1.5 m high by 1.5 m wide while *Kunzea* sp. 'Badja Carpet' is prostrate to 30 cm high with a spread of up to 4 m. The leaves are small, obovate, 2–4 mm long by 2–3 mm wide and arranged alternately.

Flowering period is early summer and the fluffy white flowers¹ are produced in small terminal clusters on short branchlets. By contrast, flowers of *K. capitata* are usually mauve although white forms do exist.

The red stems of the new growth originating from the centre of the flower clusters are an attractive feature of the plant.

Propagation is achieved from cuttings, which strike readily. Layering may also be possible as the plant has been observed to develop roots at the nodes in moist, mulched garden beds.

The plant performs best in better drained soils but grows satisfactorily in heavier clay soils. Full sun is an important consideration in cultivation, as plants in shaded positions have been slower in developing. No damage from insects or disease has been noted and the cultivar is extremely resistant to frost.

Ron Jackson



Kunzea sp. 'Badja Carpet': *Kunzea*—in honour of Gustav Kunze (1793–1851), a naturalist and physician of Leipzig.



Kunzea sp. 'Badja carpet' fruits

¹RHS Colour Chart, 1966: petals and filaments, white 155B.

COMMERSIONIA FRASERI

Commersonia fraseri: *Commersonia*—after Philibert Commerson (1727–73), a French naturalist, botanist and explorer with Louis Antoine d' Bougainville, on *La Boudeuse* and *L'Etoile* 1766–69; *fraseri*—after Charles Fraser (c. 1788–1831), a botanical collector and superintendent of the Sydney Botanic Gardens in the early 19th century.



Commersonia fraseri is a member of the family Sterculiaceae, and is found in parts of the wet *Eucalyptus* forest or fringing rain-forest of Victoria, NSW and southern Queensland. It is a tall shrub or small tree varying in height from 2 to 5 m.

The alternate leaves are heart shaped, sometimes lobed, and have irregularly toothed margins. The length of the leaf hairs on the prominently veined under-surfaces gives them a whiter appearance and provides a contrast with the mid or light green of the upper surfaces. Leaf size is quite variable: from 5 to 20 cm in length and 3 to 12 cm in width.

The small white flowers¹ are massed towards the ends of the branches, in the leaf axils or opposite the leaves. The individual flowers are about 1 cm in diameter. Three conspicuous staminodes (sterile stamens) accompany each of the five white petals. The petals have a concave base surrounding the stamens and a spathe-like lamina.

In the National Botanic Gardens, this plant is most floriferous during spring and summer. Plants appear to be frost tolerant.

The five-celled ovary matures to a five-valved capsule about 2 cm in diameter. Cuttings taken during winter have struck reasonably well in seven or eight weeks.

The oldest plants in the National Botanic Gardens are 6 years of age and have attained heights of 4–5 m. They have suckered freely and produced an effective screen. For a more compact habit, regular pruning is advised.

Commersonia fraseri has been planted in both the rainforest gully of the Gardens and the Sterculiaceae section. It has grown well in both locations, although it appears more vigorous in a moist situation. Its broad leaves provide a tropical appearance and contrast with the darker tones of other foliage.

Some minor damage by leaf-eating insect larvae has been noticed on some plants.

Given the knowledge of its suckering habit, *Commersonia fraseri* could be grown to advantage where a large-leaved, long-flowering screen plant is desired.

Mark Lodder

¹RHS Colour Chart, 1966: petals, yellow group 2D; calyx lobes, red group 50C.

MELALEUCA ELLIPTICA

Melaleuca elliptica, commonly known as the granite honey myrtle, occurs in the southern part of Western Australia and ranges from Esperance in the east to the Stirling Ranges and then northward to Sharks Bay. It is usually found in full sun on outcropping granite.

In cultivation *M. elliptica* forms a medium to large, erect shrub 2–3 m high and 1.5–2 m broad, with intricate branching.

The foliage is grey-green, with elliptical leaves to 15 mm by 12 mm. If grown in a frosty area, the leaves develop a purplish tint.

Flowering in spring, summer and autumn with a peak around December in Canberra, *M. elliptica* produces large, deep, red, bottle-brush flowers to 8 cm long.¹ As with many red-flowering plants, the flowers of *M. elliptica* are attractive to birds. The large flowers which are usually borne on old wood may be obscured by dense foliage but judicious pruning allows them to be displayed to advantage.

Propagation is best from seed sown in spring, although cuttings taken in late summer are also successful.

M. elliptica grows best in a fair- to well-drained site but is adaptable to poorly drained areas. Some plants at the National Botanic Gardens, growing in heavy clay with moderately poor drainage, are only slightly smaller in stature than those growing on a steep, stony slope. Very wet areas should be avoided. If planted in a shady position or crowded by other plants a poor, straggly bush will result. An open sunny aspect is best.

M. elliptica can withstand salt winds in dry coastal areas and makes a good screen against salt spray. No pests or diseases have been reported at the National Botanic Gardens.

M. elliptica has been commercially available for some years.

Stuart Donaldson

¹RHS Colour Chart, 1966: stamens, red group 53D.

Melaleuca elliptica: *Melaleuca*—a latinised Greek compound, *mela*, from *melan*, black, and *-leuca*, from *leukon*, white (the reason for the name is obscure, but it is said to refer to the dark trunk, possibly burnt, and the white upper branches of the first *Melaleuca* named; another opinion contrasts the white bark with the dark foliage of some species); *elliptica*—the feminine gender of a botanical Latin adjective, *ellipticus*, from the Greek, *ellipticos*, referring to the leaves having an elliptic shape.



MYOPORUM DEBILE

Myoporum and *Eremophila* are the two Australian genera of the small, chiefly Australasian family Myoporaceae. As one of nineteen endemic *Myoporum* species, *Myoporum debile* is an almost prostrate sub-shrub found in NSW and Queensland. It inhabits clay soils in some of the woodland-grass communities on the western side of the Great Dividing Range.

In cultivation, the density of its foliage produces an attractive ground cover plant. The numerous stems have upturned tips and layer in the humus beneath. Occasionally, ascending stems provide some height. The alternate leaves are 4–6 cm long and 6–15 mm wide, the petiole absent or very short. The leaves are inserted at an acute angle to the stem, exhibiting their pleasant mid- to light-green colour.

The small flowers are set individually in leaf axils towards the end of the branches. Each five-petalled flower is about 1 cm in diameter, white with faint pink or purple tips or totally 'bluish'. Flowering occurs in spring–summer with red to purple succulent mature fruit (drupes) in February–March.¹ The latter were eaten by Aborigines.

The better plants of this species growing at the National Botanic Gardens can be found in both sunny and semi-shaded locations. In Canberra, frost protection is necessary. Planting a number of plants produces an attractive effect. Alternatively, a healthy specimen will cover an area of a square metre in two or three years.

Myoporum debile can be grown from seed, although cuttings are preferred. Best results have been achieved by taking cuttings in summer. These require three or four weeks to strike.

Once established, *Myoporum debile* is a desirable ground cover plant worthy of cultivation for its flowers, fruits and foliage.

Mark Lodder



Myoporum debile: *Myoporum*—a latinised Greek compound, *myo*, be closed, of the eyes, and *poros*, a pore, alluding to the closed appearance of the leaf glands; *debile*, the neuter gender of the Latin adjective *debilis*, weak or small, referring to the plant's low-growing habit.

¹RHS Colour Chart, 1966: flower, fruit, purplish bloom, red-purple group 74C.

LEPTOSPERMUM LANIGERUM var. MACROCARPUM

This large-fruited *Leptospermum* occurs in the northern Blue Mountains, west of Sydney, where it is found growing in poor sandstone soils on north-west slopes at the base of cliffs, in full sun or part shade. It forms a low, scrambling shrub usually 1 m high by 2 m across.

In cultivation at the National Botanic Gardens there are many plants of different ages, mostly forming compact, densely branching shrubs.

The foliage is dark green and slightly glossy, the leaves being oblong to 2 cm long by 1 cm wide.

The flowers of this variety are large for a tea-tree, being 25 mm in diameter, with pink petals, whitish stamens and a conspicuous, green centre.¹ Shrubs with pale green-yellow or dark-red flowers are occasionally seen. Flowering occurs in summer and autumn, and for the remainder of the year the shiny brown fruits to 25 mm in diameter contrast well with the foliage. As flowering occurs on the new wood *L. lanigerum* var. *macrocarpum* makes a useful cut flower.

Propagation is successful from seed, but for true-to-type plants cuttings taken in late autumn would be best.

In cultivation *L. lanigerum* var. *macrocarpum* grows better in a well-drained site, but is adaptable to poorly drained soil. At the National Botanic Gardens it has been shown to be frost hardy and may be grown in shrub borders or rockeries, in full sun or heavy shade. It may be pruned after flowering.

Unlike many *Leptospermum* spp. used in home gardens, for example *L. scoparium* cultivars, this species seems to be relatively free of pests and diseases.

Stuart Donaldson



Leptospermum lanigerum var. *macrocarpum*: *Leptospermum*—a latinised Greek compound, *lepto*-, from *leptos*, slender, and *-spermum*, from *sperma*, seed; *lanigerum*—the neuter gender of the Latin adjective, *laniger*, wool-bearing, referring to the hairiness of the plant; *macrocarpum*—a latinised Greek compound, *macro*-, from *macro*-, large, and *-carpum*, from *carpos*, fruit, referring to the large fruit.

¹RHS Colour Chart, 1966: petals, red-purple group 59D; stamens, white group 155A.

INDEX

GARDENS RENAMED The Canberra Botanic Gardens was renamed the National Botanic Gardens on 21 December 1978 because the new name was considered more appropriate in view of the national characteristics of the living collection. This is being assembled from field collections undertaken in all parts of Australia, the collected specimens being grown at Canberra and the Gardens' Jervis Bay annexe on the east coast of the continent

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